

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-14

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DRAFTED BY DOD/ ISA: MAMARTIN; EA/ TB: MJWILKINSON; DME

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

INFO CINCPAC

CINCPACAF

COMUSMACTHAI

S E C R E T STATE 046062

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, TH

SUBJ: TACTICAL WEAPONS RANGES - THAILAND

REFS: A. BANGKOK 2526

B. CINCPACAF 040330 Z JAN 73

1. WE APPRECIATE ANALYSIS OF WEAPONS RANGE PROBLEM GIVEN IN REF A AND RECOGNIZE MULTIFOLD POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES POSED AT THIS TIME BY ANY REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FACILITIES, PARTICULARLY, AS IN CASE OF RANGES, WHERE THERE IS POTENTIAL FOR ADVERSELY AFFECTING LOCAL POPULATION. NONETHELESS, IT REMAINS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN MINIMUM PROFICIENCY STANDARDS FOR OPERATIONAL USAF UNITS ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF MISSION TO BE PREPARED FOR RESUMPTION OF TACTICAL OPERATIONS ON SHORT NOTICE.

2. AS DISCUSSED REF B, FACILITIES IN PHILIPPINES CAN PROVIDE ONLY LIMITED PROPORTION OF RANGE NEEDS. NO OTHER SITE
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OUTSIDE THAILAND APPEARS FEASIBLE. WE HAVE ALSO LOOKED INTO OTHER POSSIBILITIES INCLUDING OVER- WATER RANGES AND USE OF EXISTING RTAF RANGES. USAF ANALYSTS HERE RULE OUT OVER- WATER RANGES AS UNSUITABLE FOR TACTICAL TRAINING MISSION OWING INTER ALIA TO DANGERS INHERENT IN DEPTH PERCEPTION OVER SEA VICE LAND FOR AIR- TO- GROUND PRACTICE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT RTAF' S CHANDY RANGE NEAR TAKHLI CANNOT BE USED FOR MOST TRAINING BECAUSE OF SMALL SIZE AND

EXPANSION HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN RULED OUT BECAUSE OF POPULATION PATTERNS IN AREA. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT RTAF HAS A NON- SCOREABLE ISLAND RANGE NEAR PRACHUAB, BUT WE HAVE LITTLE INFO AVAILABLE AND THERE WOULD SEEM TO BE CONSIDERABLE PROBLEMS ATTENDANT ON FERRYING AND REFUELLING OF AIRCRAFT FROM NE TO PRACHUAB AREA (OR ANY OTHER GULF ISLAND).

3. TO MAINTAIN CURRENT HIGH LEVELS OF COMBAT READINESS IN THE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CEASEFIRE IN SVN WOULD REQUIRE THREE RANGES PLUS USE OF THE CLARK FACILITY. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS THAT LEAD TIME FOR NEGOTIATION AND CONSTRUCTION WOULD MAKE IT VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DEVELOP THREE RANGES PRIOR TO APRIL 73. THEREFORE, PROJECTING TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PERIOD BEYOND APRIL AND BARRING UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENTS IN SEA, OUR ANALYSIS IS THAT TWO RANGES IN THAILAND PLUS USE OF CLARK FACILITIES WILL BE SUFFICIENT.

4. REF B SUGGESTS USE OF UDORN JETTISON RANGE AND CONSIDERATION OF TWO SITES NEAR NAM PHONG AND UBON. IT APPEARS TO US THAT USE OF JETTISON RANGE SHOULD PRESENT MINIMUM PROBLEMS ON ASSUMPTIONS THAT AREA IS CLEARED AND AVAILABLE, AND THAT RTAF WOULD APPRECIATE THAT IT WILL DERIVE CONSIDERABLE BENEFIT FROM DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY RANGE FOR ITS OWN USE. HOWEVER, MISSION IN CONSULTATION WITH USSAG/7 TH IS IN BEST POSITION TO DETERMINE FEASIBILITY OF UDORN COMPARED WITH OTHER ALTERNATIVES WITHIN THAILAND.

5. IF OUR ASSUMPTION THAT UDORN JETTISON RANGE CAN BE CONVERTED WITH MINIMUM DIFFICULTY IS CORRECT, REQUEST YOU INITIATE DISCUSSIONS ASAP WITH APPROPRIATE THAIS IN SECRET

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EFFORT TO SECURE EARLY CONVERSION TO SCOREABLE RANGE.

WE ASSUME PROPOSAL OF A JOINT- USE FACILITY IS MOST APPROPRIATE AND APPROVE DISCUSSION UNDER SUCH A CONCEPT TO ASSURE RTG HAS LEAD ROLE IN SOLVING ANY PROBLEMS IN CONNECTION WITH LAND RIGHTS, CONTROL OF ACCESS, ETC. AND TO ELICIT MAXIMUM RTG SUPPORT.

6. REQUEST YOU ALSO REVIEW ALL POSSIBILITIES FOR SECOND SITE IN THAILAND AND EXPLORE WITH RTG ON PRIORITY BASIS FEASIBILITY OF PROCEEDING WITH ARRANGEMENTS FOR SECOND RANGE. ROGERS

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